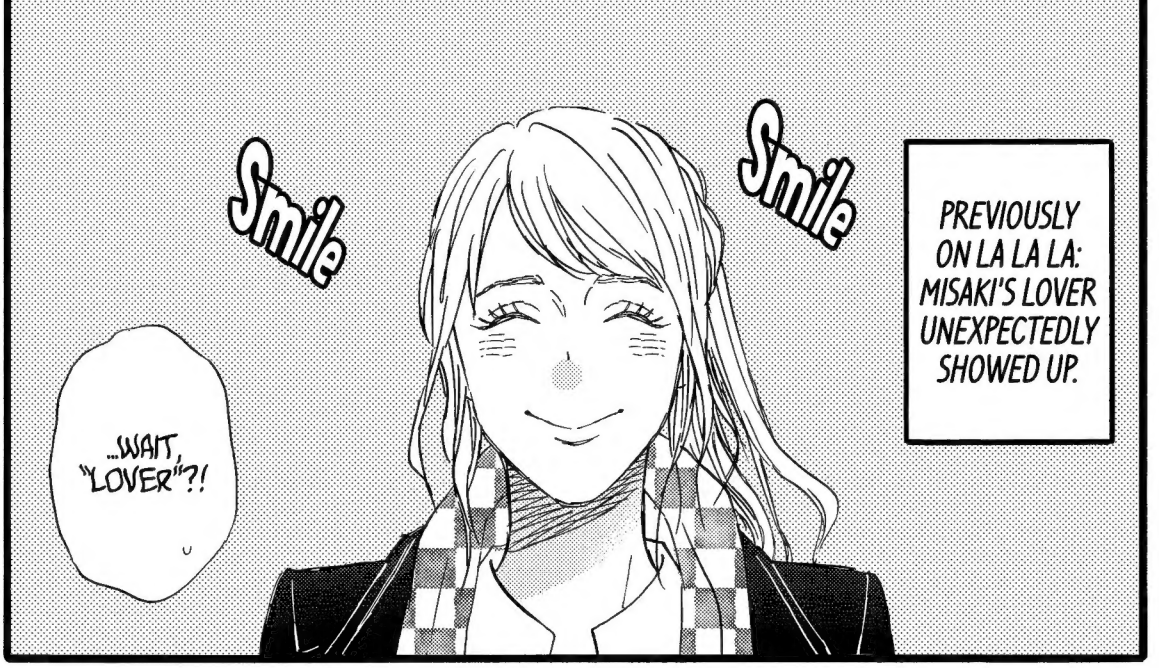
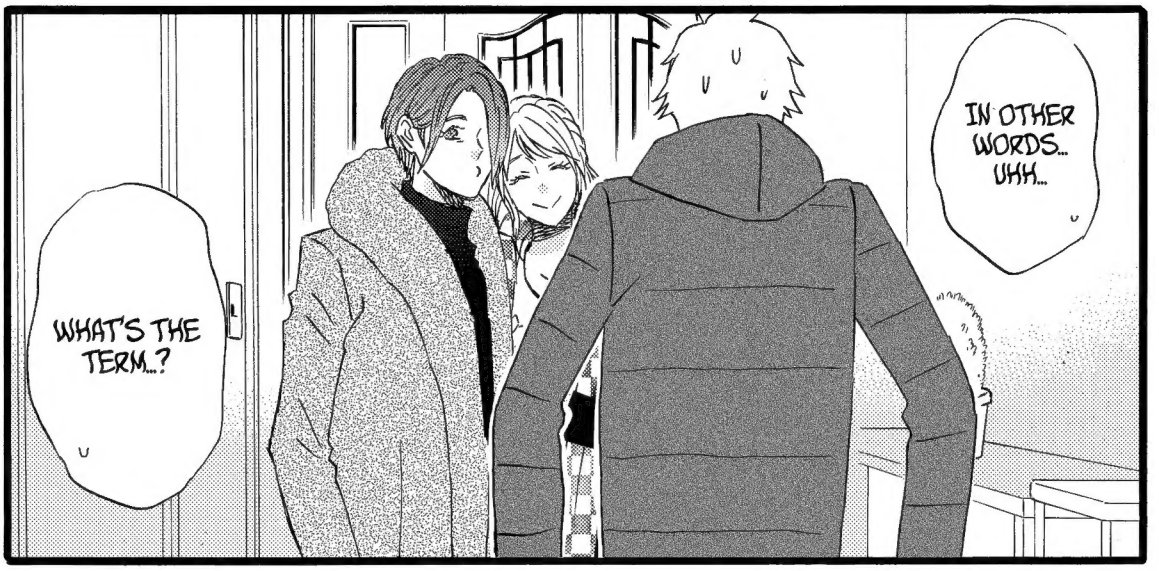
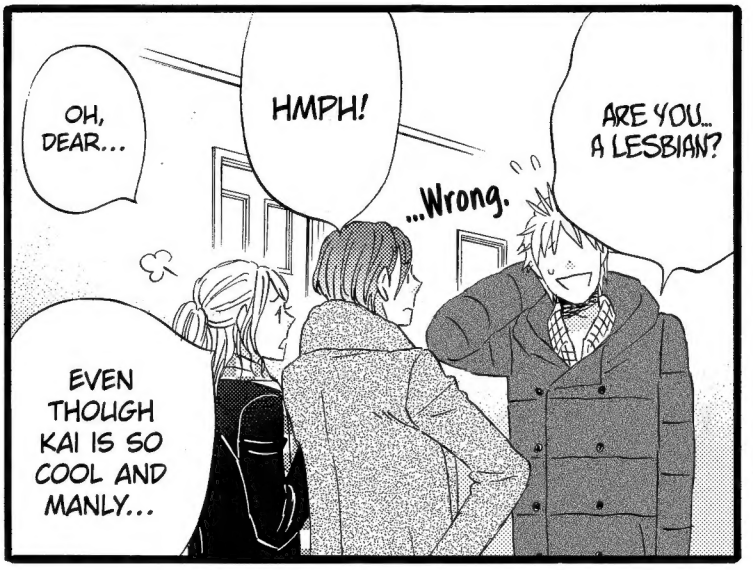
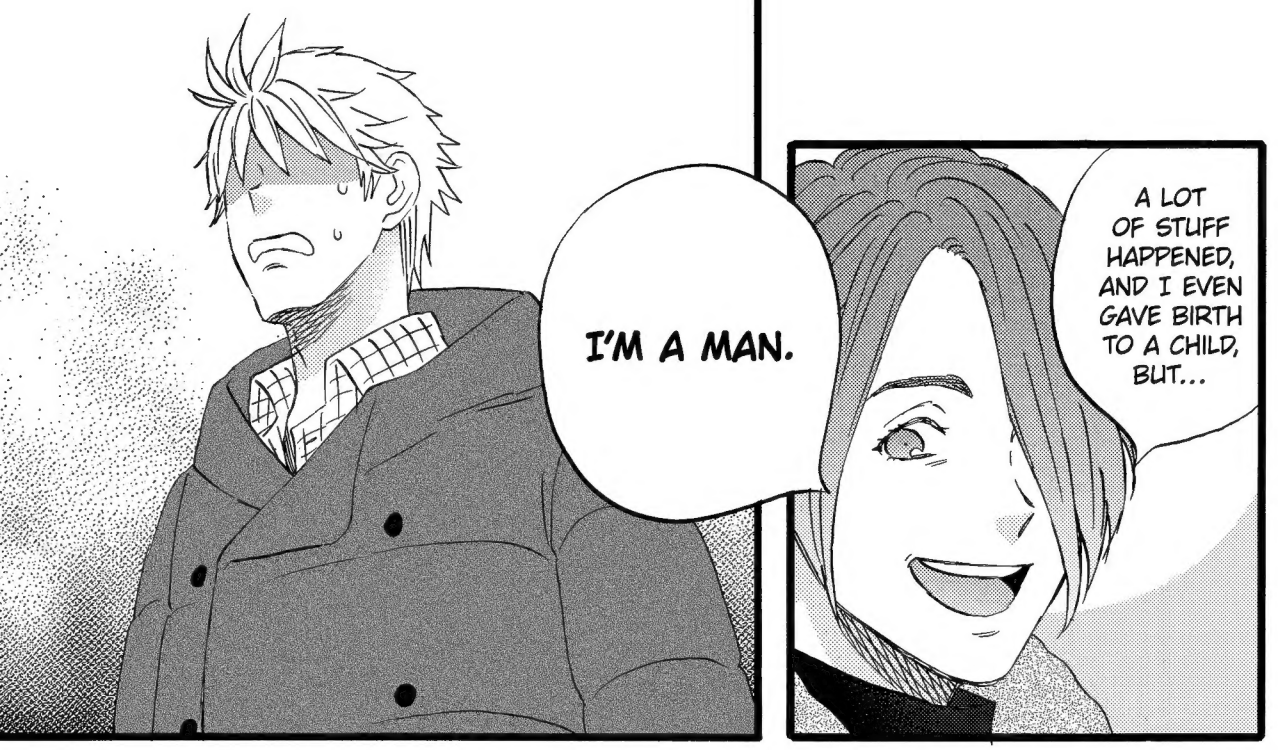

PREVIOUSLY ON LA LA LA: MISAKI'S LOVER UNEXPECTEDLY SHOWED UP.
Smile
Smile
...WAIT, "LOVER"?!

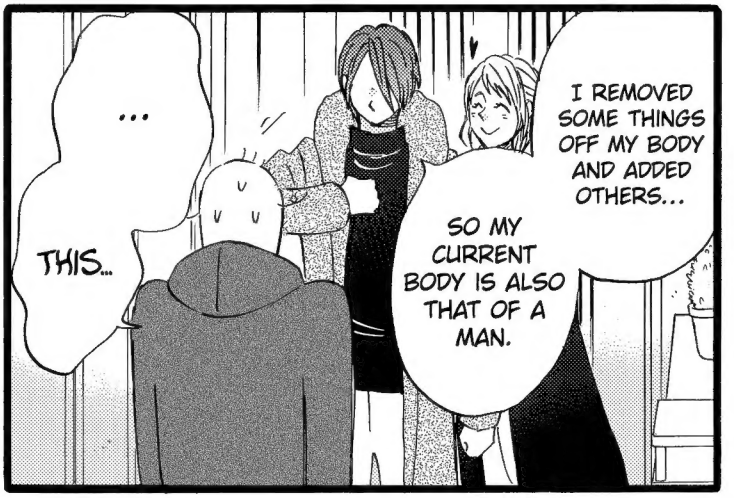

IN OTHER WORDS... UHH...
WHAT'S THE TERM...?

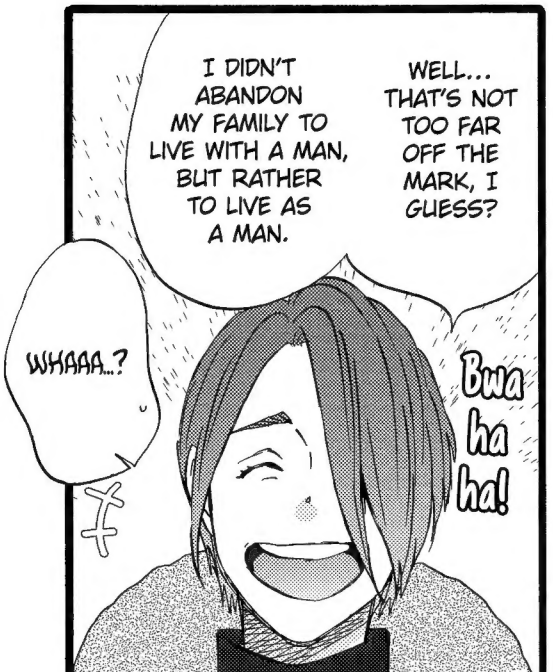
UHH... "MANLY"? DOES THAT MEAN...

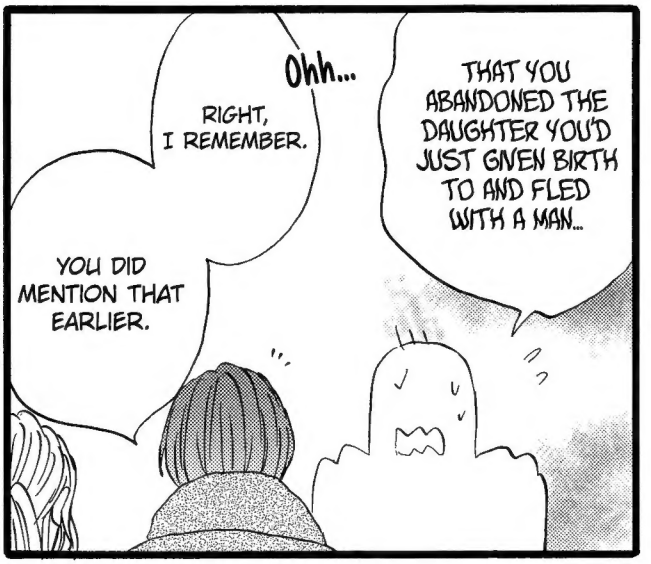

ARE YOU... A LESBIAN?
HMPH!
...Wrong.
OH, DEAR...
EVEN THOUGH KAI IS SO COOL AND MANLY...


I'M A MAN.
A LOT OF STUFF HAPPENED, AND I EVEN GAVE BIRTH TO A CHILD, BUT...

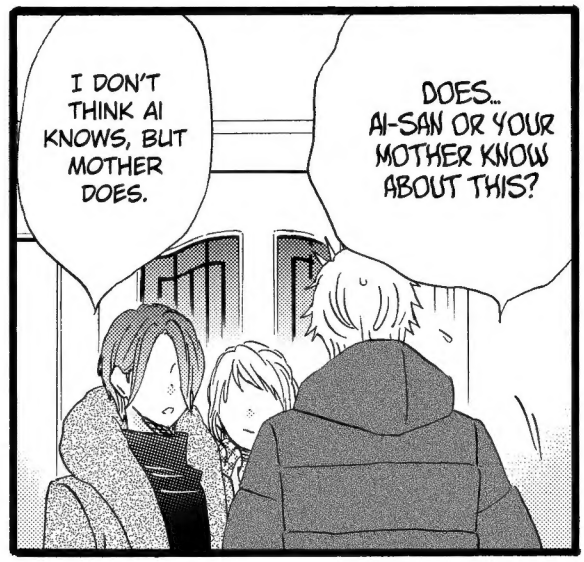
WHAT DID YOU HEAR?
THIS IS DIFFERENT FROM WHAT I'D HEARD...

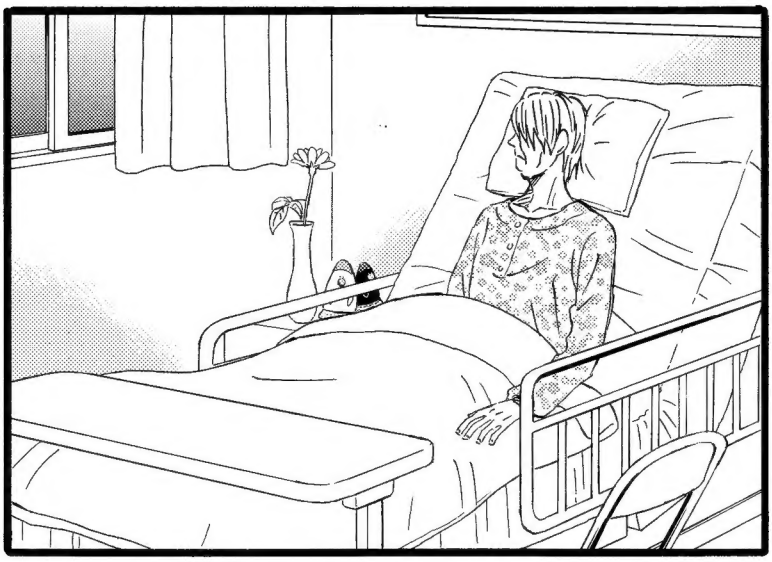

...
THIS...
SO MY CURRENT BODY IS ALSO THAT OF A MAN.
I REMOVED SOME THINGS OFF MY BODY AND ADDED OTHERS...


I DIDN'T ABANDON MY FAMILY TO LIVE WITH A MAN, BUT RATHER TO LIVE AS A MAN.
WELL... THAT'S NOT TOO FAR OFF THE MARK, I GUESS?
WHAAA...?
Bwa ha ha!

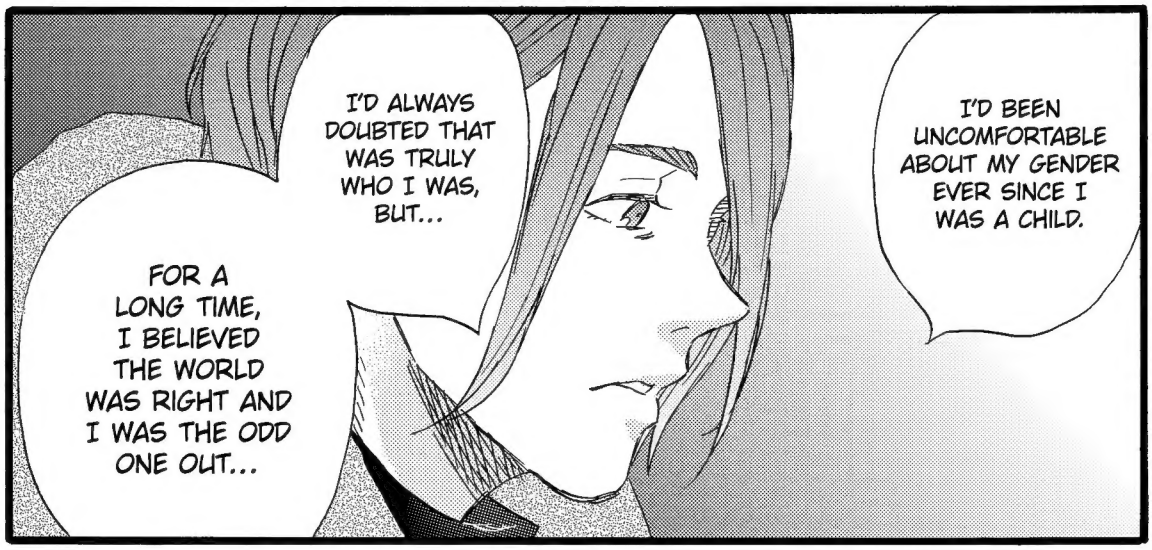

Ohh...
RIGHT, I REMEMBER.
YOU DID MENTION THAT EARLIER.
THAT YOU ABANDONED THE DAUGHTER YOU'D JUST GIVEN BIRTH TO AND FLED WITH A MAN...

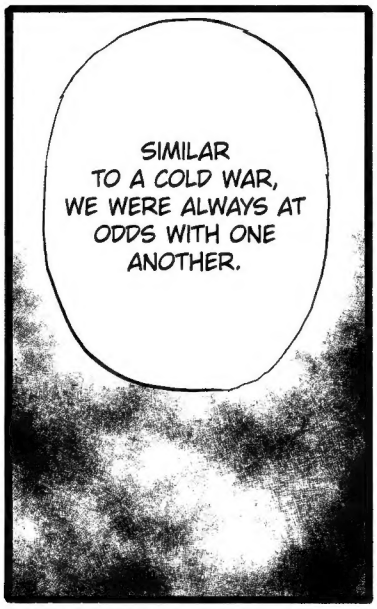
SHE WAS THE ONE WHO ENCOURAGED ME TO LEAVE THIS HOUSE AND LIVE AS A MAN.


DOES... AI-SAN OR YOUR MOTHER KNOW ABOUT THIS?
I DON'T THINK AI KNOWS, BUT MOTHER DOES.

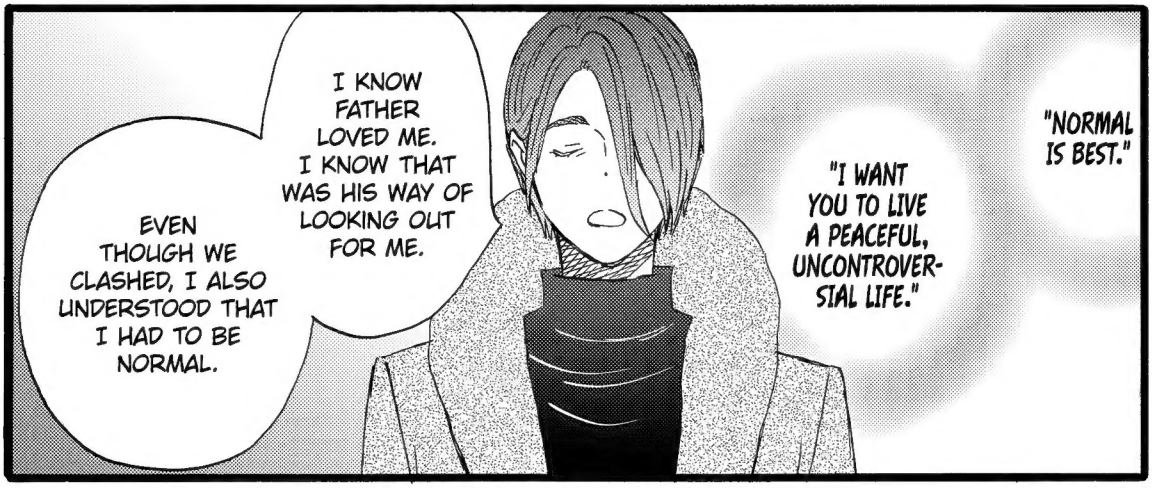


YOUR MOTHER DID...?

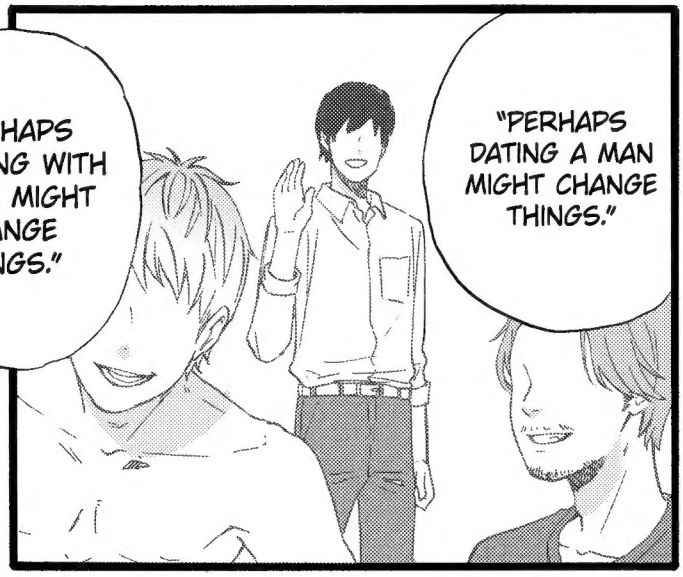

I'D BEEN UNCOMFORTABLE ABOUT MY GENDER EVER SINCE I WAS A CHILD.
I'D ALWAYS DOUBTED THAT WAS TRULY WHO I WAS, BUT...
FOR A LONG TIME, I BELIEVED THE WORLD WAS RIGHT AND I WAS THE ODD ONE OUT...


SIMILAR TO A COLD WAR, WE WERE ALWAYS AT ODDS WITH ONE ANOTHER.

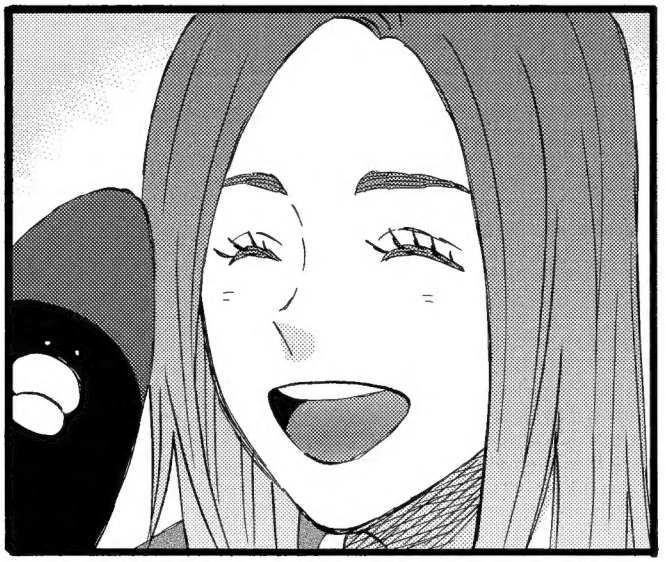
I ESPECIALLY BELIEVED THIS BECAUSE MY FATHER WAS THE KIND OF MAN WHO INSISTED I SHOULD BE NORMAL.
FOR HIM, MY ABNORMAL EXISTENCE...
WAS SOMETHING THAT OUGHT TO BE CORRECTED.

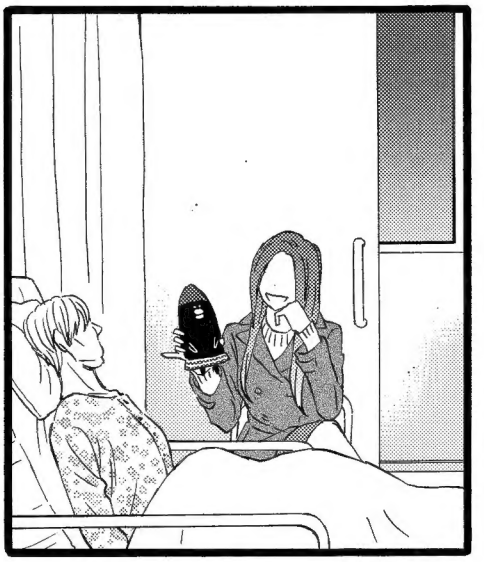

"NORMAL IS BEST."
"I WANT YOU TO LIVE A PEACEFUL, UNCONTROVERSIAL LIFE."
I KNOW FATHER LOVED ME. I KNOW THAT WAS HIS WAY OF LOOKING OUT FOR ME.
EVEN THOUGH WE CLASHED, I ALSO UNDERSTOOD THAT I HAD TO BE NORMAL.

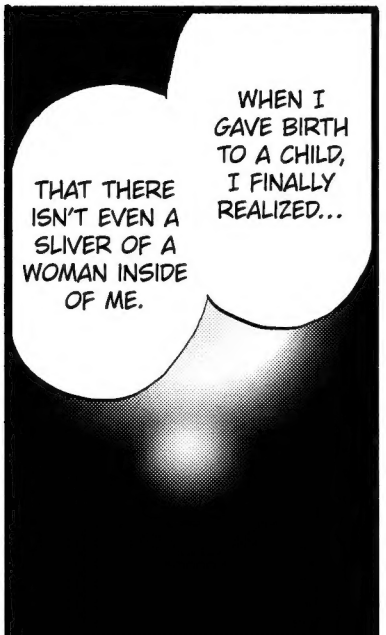
...AND FINALLY...


"PERHAPS SLEEPING WITH A MAN MIGHT CHANGE THINGS."
"PERHAPS DATING A MAN MIGHT CHANGE THINGS."

"PERHAPS GIVING BIRTH TO A CHILD MIGHT CHANGE THINGS."





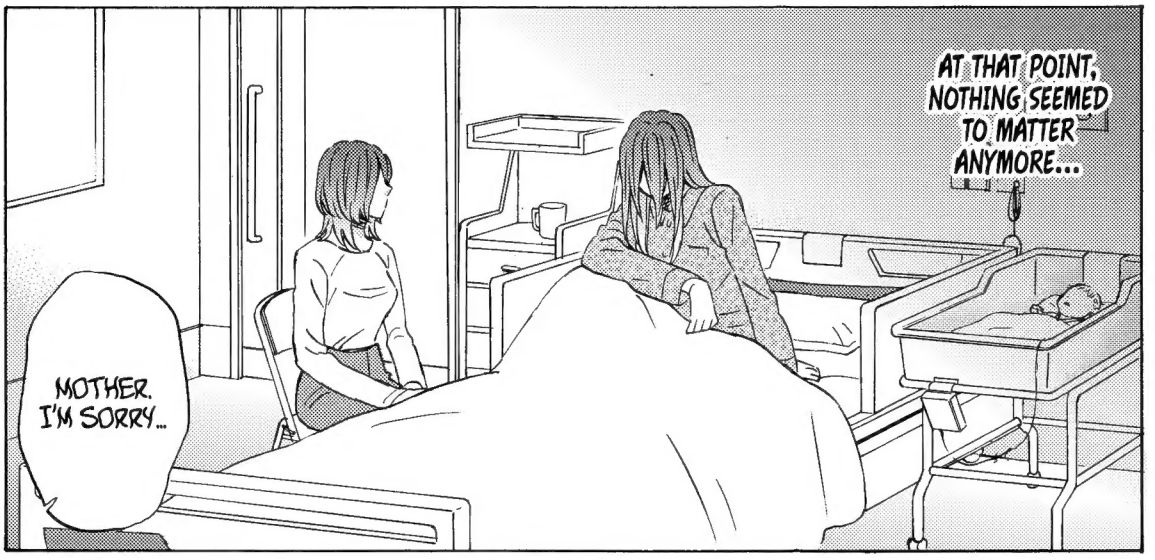

WHEN I GAVE BIRTH TO A CHILD, I FINALLY REALIZED...
THAT THERE ISN'T EVEN A SLIVER OF A WOMAN INSIDE OF ME.

SLEEPING WITH MEN FELT DISGUSTING.
I LIKED WOMEN AFTER ALL.
IN THE END, NOTHING CHANGED.

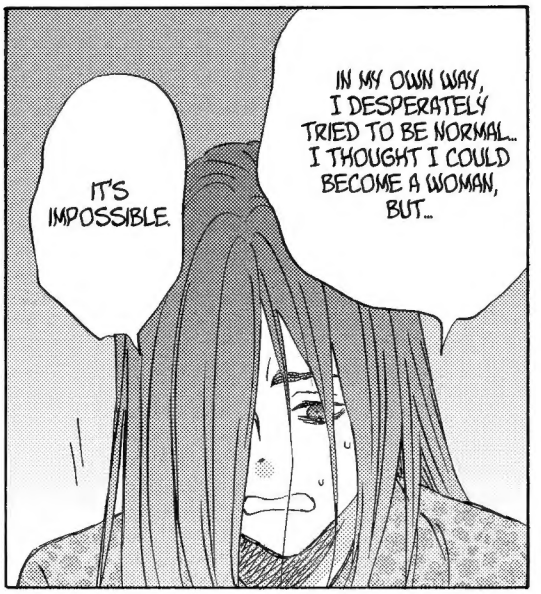
AT THE TIME, MY MIND WASN'T IN THE RIGHT MENTAL STATE TO BE A MOTHER...
I KNOW IT PROBABLY SOUNDS LIKE AN EXCUSE FOR ABANDONING MY FAMILY, BUT...

IT'S BECAUSE I GAVE BIRTH TO A CHILD, THAT I WAS ABLE TO FIND MY TRUE SELF.
SO THAT'S WHY...

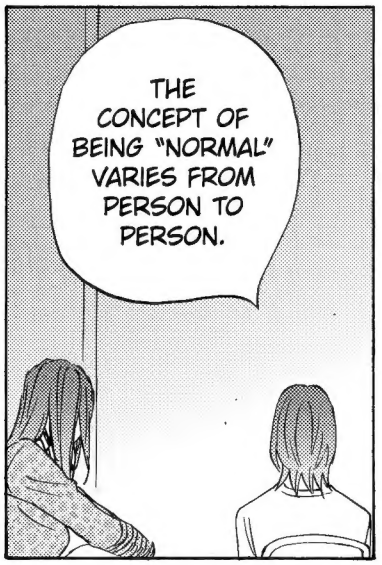
I FELT TERRIBLE FOR FEELING THIS WAY, AND FOR THE CHILD I GAVE BIRTH TO...
I DESPAIRED ABOUT BEING BORN WITH A BODY LIKE THIS.
I DESPAIRED ABOUT MY INABILITY TO LIVE UP TO MY PARENTS' EXPECTATIONS.


AT THAT POINT, NOTHING SEEMED TO MATTER ANYMORE...
MOTHER. I'M SORRY...

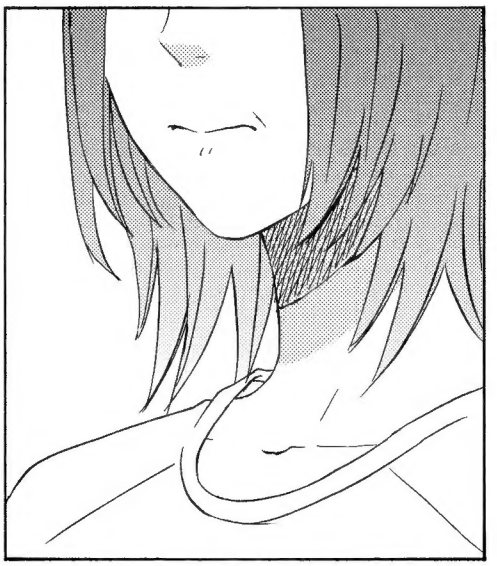
AT THIS RATE...
I DON'T THINK...
I HAVE THE WILLPOWER TO KEEP ON LIVING...

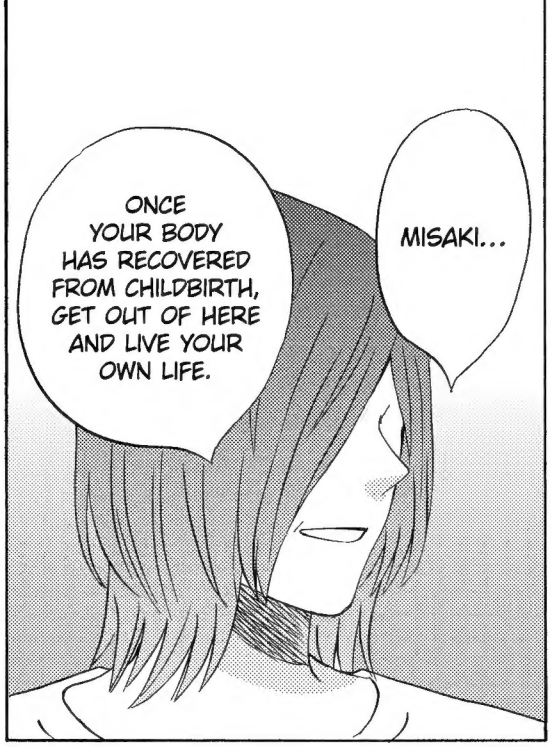

IN MY OWN WAY, I DESPERATELY TRIED TO BE NORMAL... I THOUGHT I COULD BECOME A WOMAN, BUT...
IT'S IMPOSSIBLE.

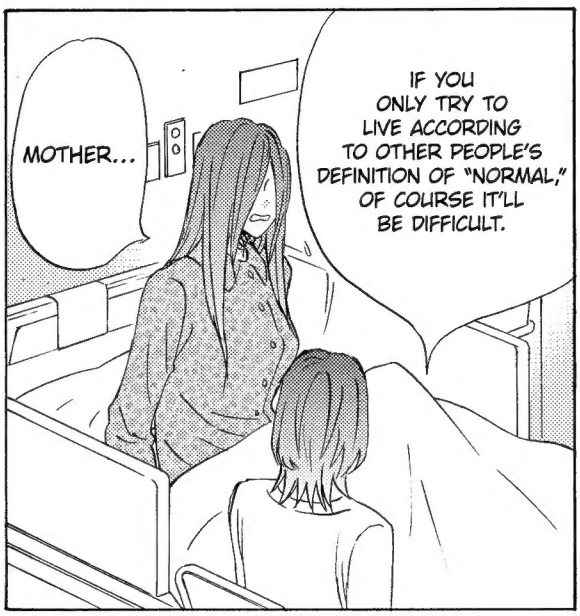
I'M SORRY THAT I COULDN'T BE NORMAL...
...


THE CONCEPT OF BEING "NORMAL" VARIES FROM PERSON TO PERSON.

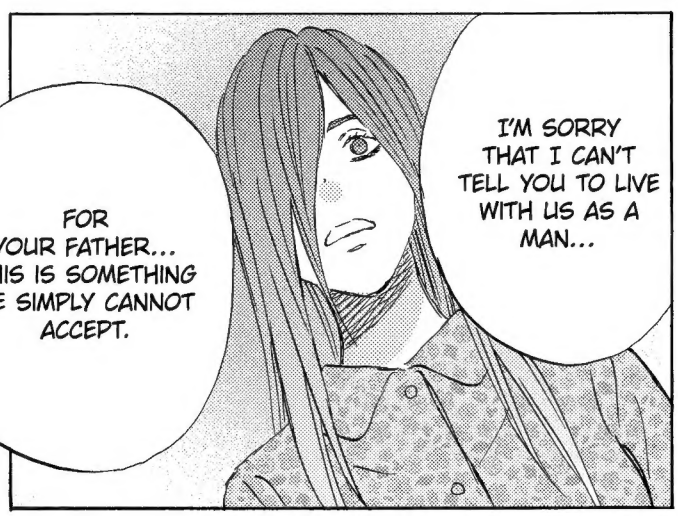
"NORMAL..."

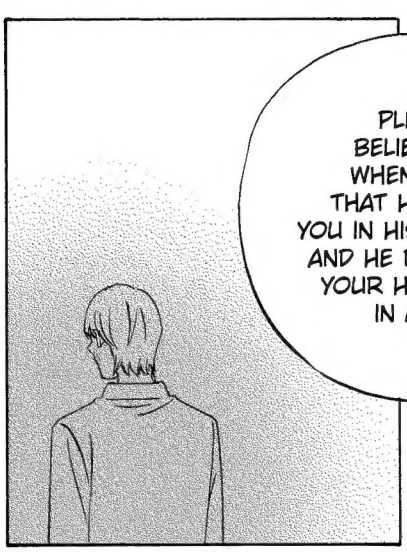


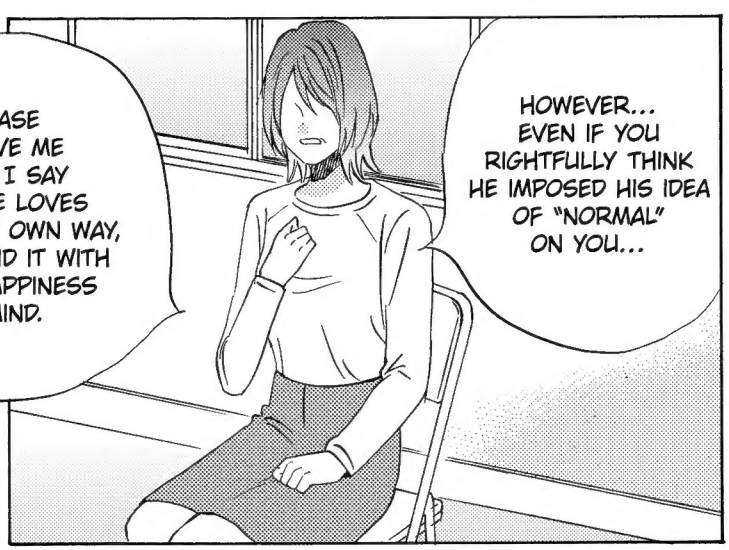

MISAKI...
ONCE YOUR BODY HAS RECOVERED FROM CHILDBIRTH, GET OUT OF HERE AND LIVE YOUR OWN LIFE.

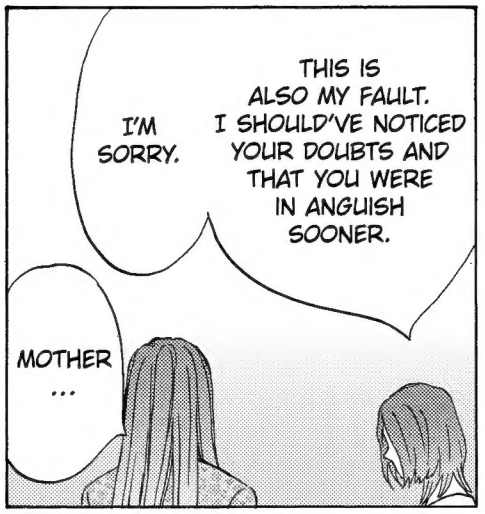

MOTHER...
IF YOU ONLY TRY TO LIVE ACCORDING TO OTHER PEOPLE'S DEFINITION OF "NORMAL," OF COURSE IT'LL BE DIFFICULT.

IF YOU STAY WITH US, YOU'LL ONLY KEEP HURTING EACH OTHER.

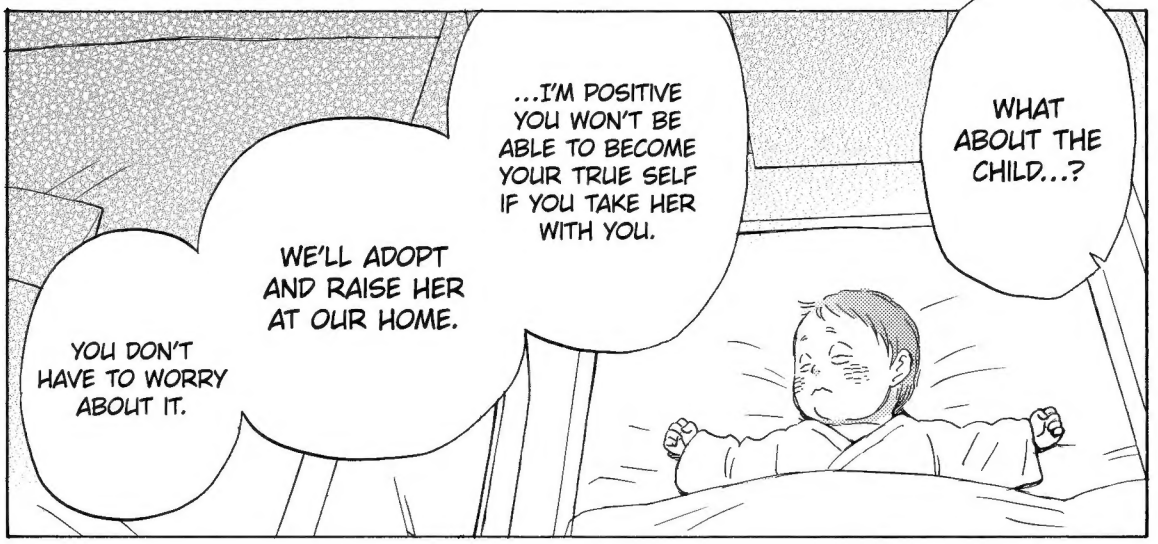

FOR YOUR FATHER... THIS IS SOMETHING HE SIMPLY CANNOT ACCEPT.
I'M SORRY THAT I CAN'T TELL YOU TO LIVE WITH US AS A MAN...


PLEASE BELIEVE ME WHEN I SAY THAT HE LOVES YOU IN HIS OWN WAY, AND HE DID IT WITH YOUR HAPPINESS IN MIND.

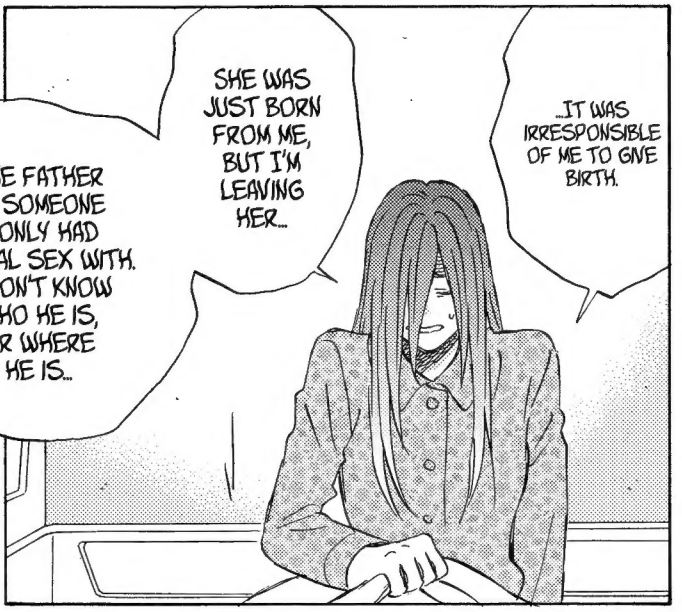

HOWEVER... EVEN IF YOU RIGHTFULLY THINK HE IMPOSED HIS IDEA OF "NORMAL" ON YOU...


I'M SORRY.
THIS IS ALSO MY FAULT. I SHOULD'VE NOTICED YOUR DOUBTS AND THAT YOU WERE IN ANGUISH SOONER.
MOTHER ...

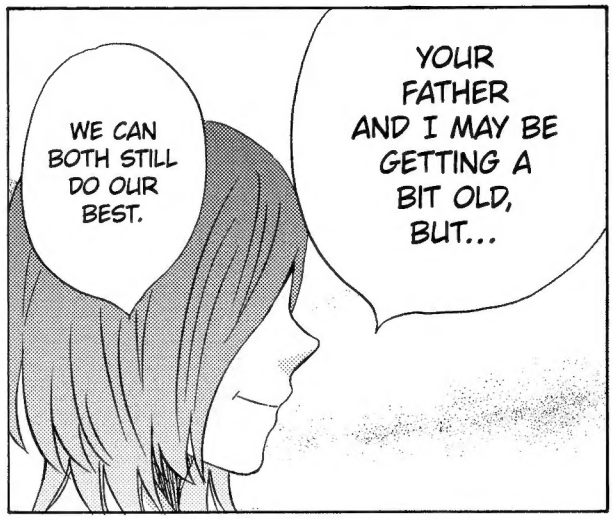
YOU TRIED VERY HARD TO BE "NORMAL," DIDN'T YOU?
I KNOW YOU DO. THAT'S WHY YOU'RE SO EXHAUSTED...
I... UNDER-STAND THAT.

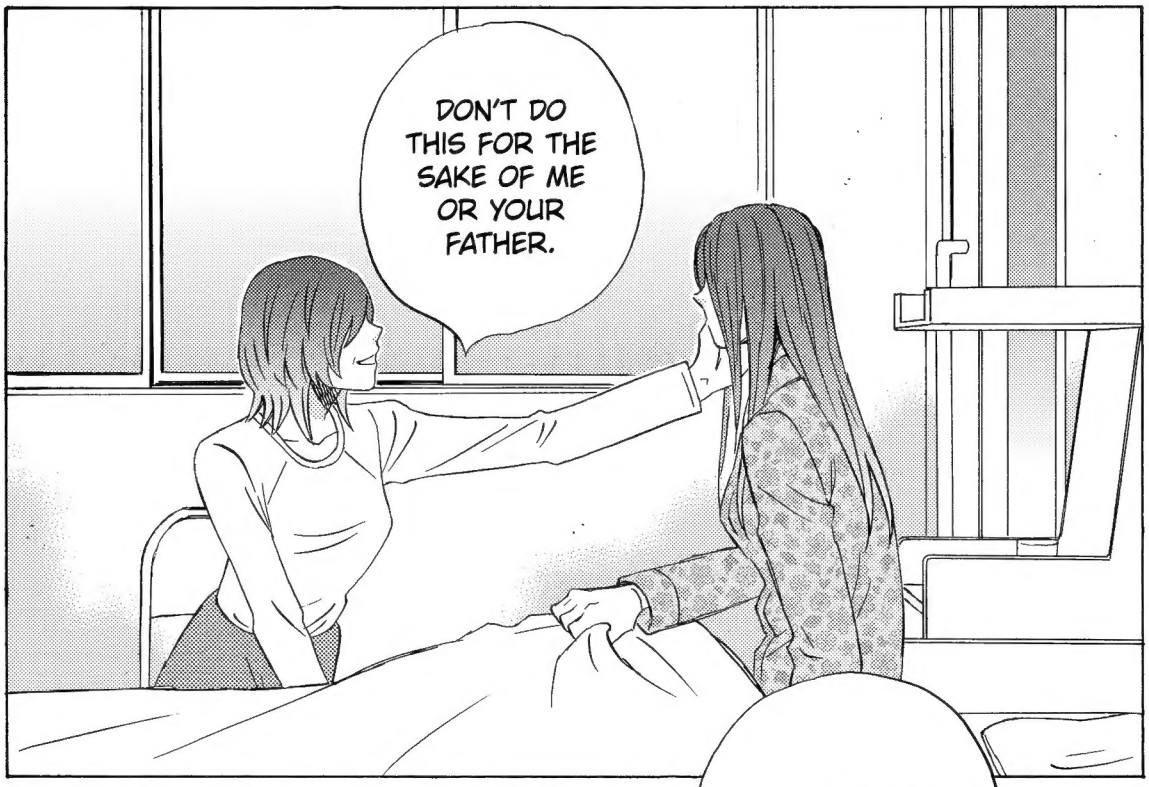

YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT IT.
WE'LL ADOPT AND RAISE HER AT OUR HOME.
...I'M POSITIVE YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO BECOME YOUR TRUE SELF IF YOU TAKE HER WITH YOU.
WHAT ABOUT THE CHILD...?

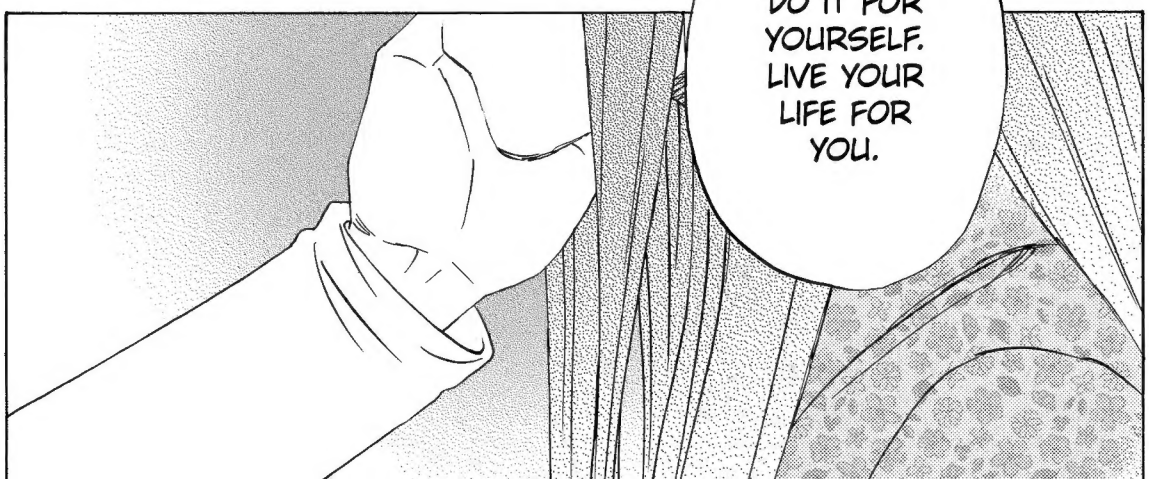
IT'S OKAY. IT'LL BE OKAY, MISAKI.

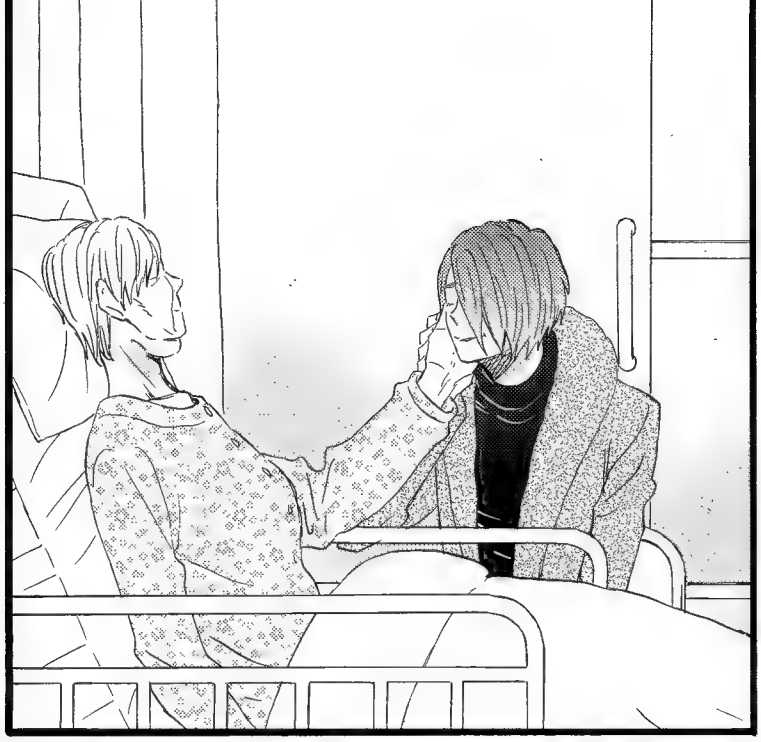

THE FATHER IS SOMEONE I ONLY HAD CASUAL SEX WITH. I DON'T KNOW WHO HE IS, OR WHERE HE IS...
SHE WAS JUST BORN FROM ME, BUT I'M LEAVING HER...
...IT WAS IRRESPONSIBLE OF ME TO GIVE BIRTH.

WE'LL DO EVERYTHING WE CAN...
TO ENSURE THAT THIS CHILD NEVER REGRETS BEING BORN.


YOUR FATHER AND I MAY BE GETTING A BIT OLD, BUT...
WE CAN BOTH STILL DO OUR BEST.


DON'T DO THIS FOR THE SAKE OF ME OR YOUR FATHER.


DO IT FOR YOURSELF. LIVE YOUR LIFE FOR YOU.

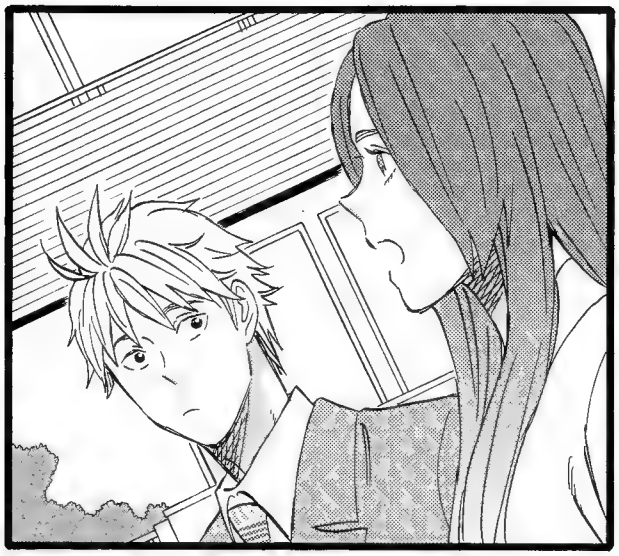


WHAT?! REALLY? AREN'T YOU GOING TO SAY GOODBYE TO AI-SAN?
ALL RIGHT. WE'LL BE GOING, THEN.
SAY GOODBYE TO AI FOR ME.
Step

TRULY, WHAT A COLD PERSON...
THANKS FOR LETTING ME STAY THE NIGHT.

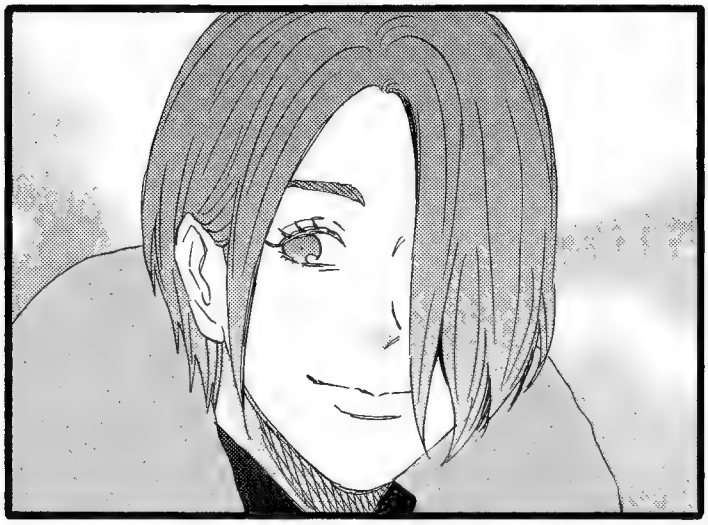
I'VE GOT NOTHING MORE TO SAY TO HER.
SHE'S JUST SOMEONE I GAVE BIRTH TO.
I'M NOT HER MOTHER. WE DON'T HAVE THAT BOND.
WHAAAT?!

IF THERE'S A CHANCE, LET'S MEET AGAIN!
SEE YOU!
...NO.
ON THE SURFACE,
"AS COMPENSATION..."
I SUPPOSE THESE TWO APPEAR "COLD," BUT...
"I WANT ONE YEN!"



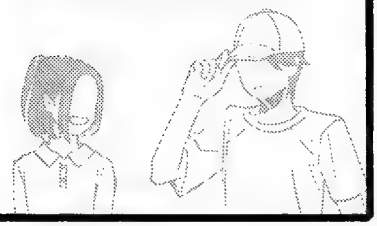
"THE LIFE OF MY MOTHER IS SOMETHING IRREPLACEABLE AND PRICELESS..."

"I ABSOLUTELY DIDN'T WANT TO GIVE THEM ANY ROOM TO BARGAIN."



A FREE-SPIRITED OLDER BROTHER AND A LITTLE SISTER WHO DOES EVERYTHING AT HER OWN PACE...

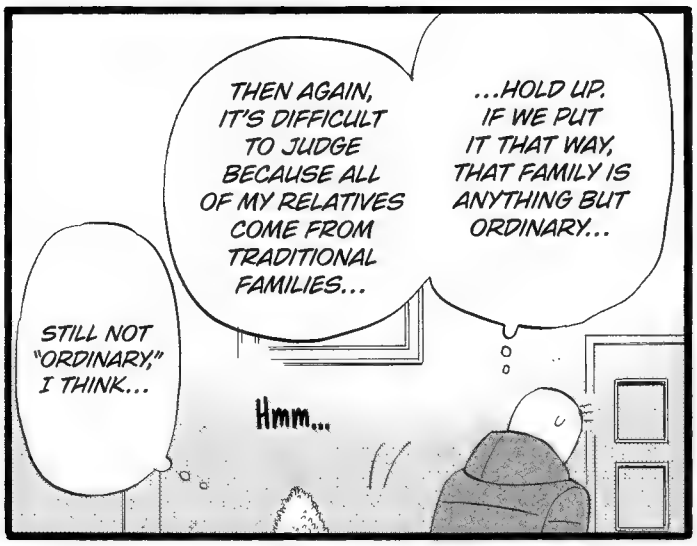
JUST YOUR ORDINARY, GOOD SIBLINGS.

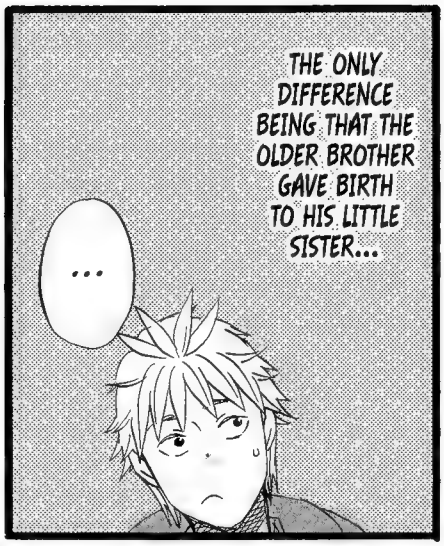


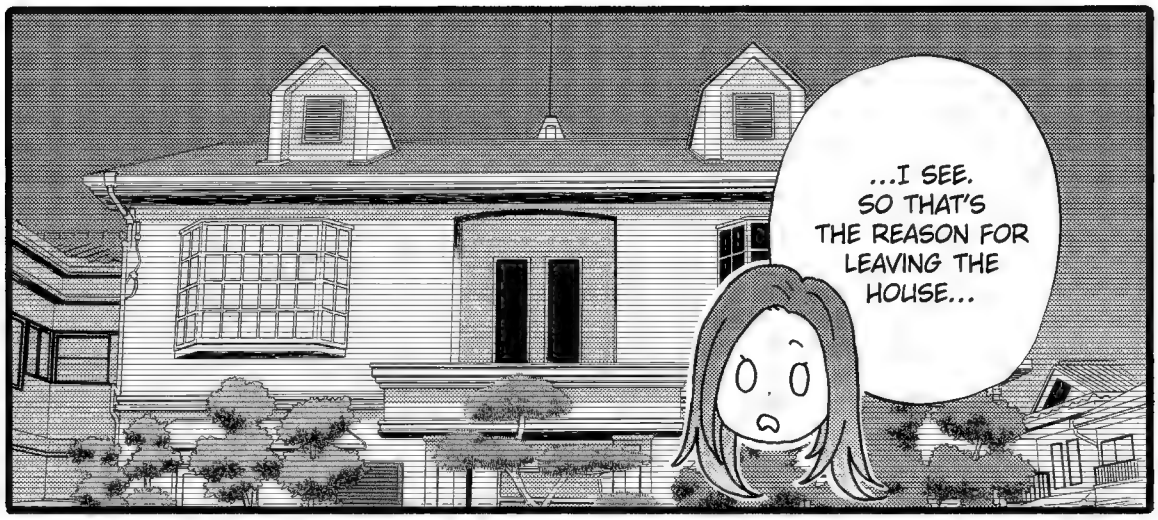
BUT THANKS TO THE KIND PERSON WHO RAISED THEM BOTH...

IT'S TRUE THAT AI-SAN AND HER BIOLOGICAL MOTHER DON'T HAVE A REAL BOND.

MAYBE THEY COULD BE SIBLINGS?

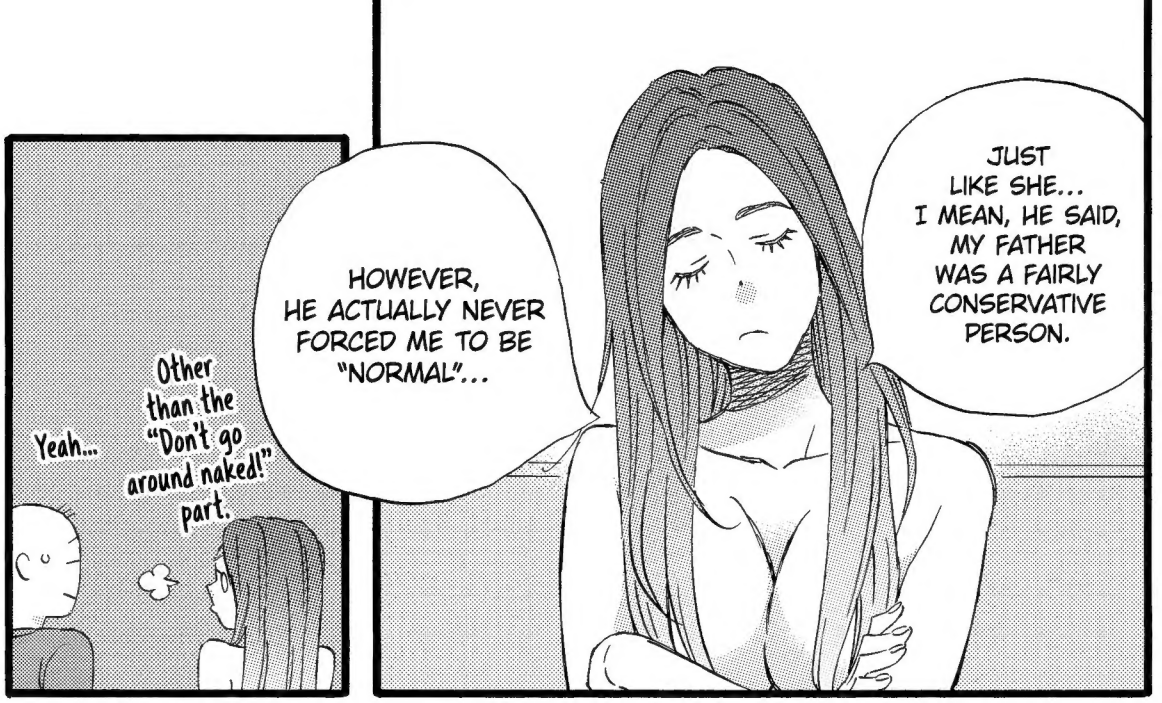

THEN AGAIN, IT'S DIFFICULT TO JUDGE BECAUSE ALL OF MY RELATIVES COME FROM TRADITIONAL FAMILIES...
...HOLD UP. IF WE PUT IT THAT WAY, THAT FAMILY IS ANYTHING BUT ORDINARY...
STILL NOT "ORDINARY," I THINK...
Hmm...

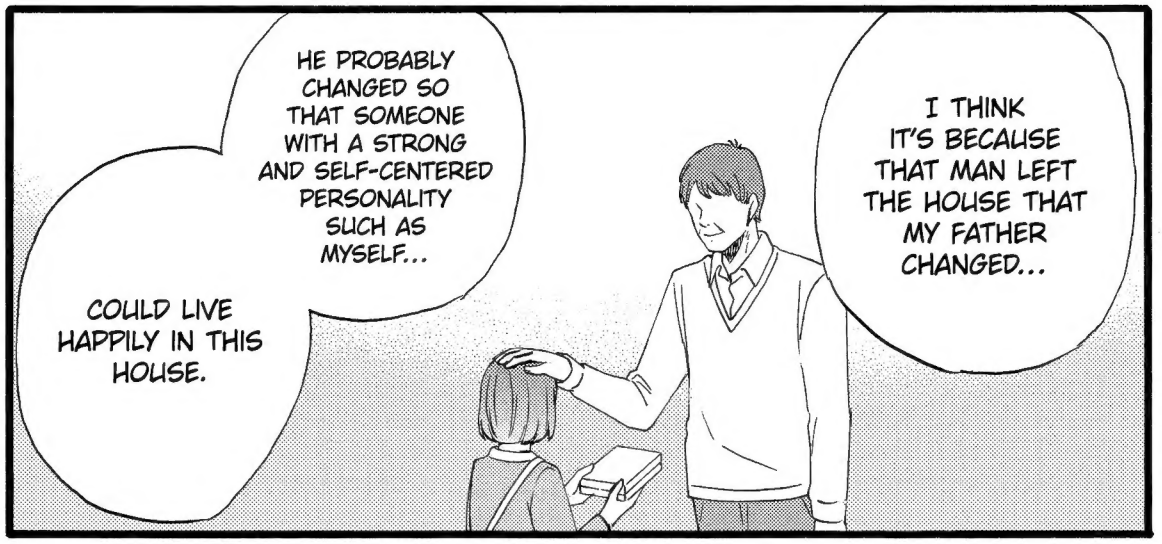

THE ONLY DIFFERENCE BEING THAT THE OLDER BROTHER GAVE BIRTH TO HIS LITTLE SISTER...
...

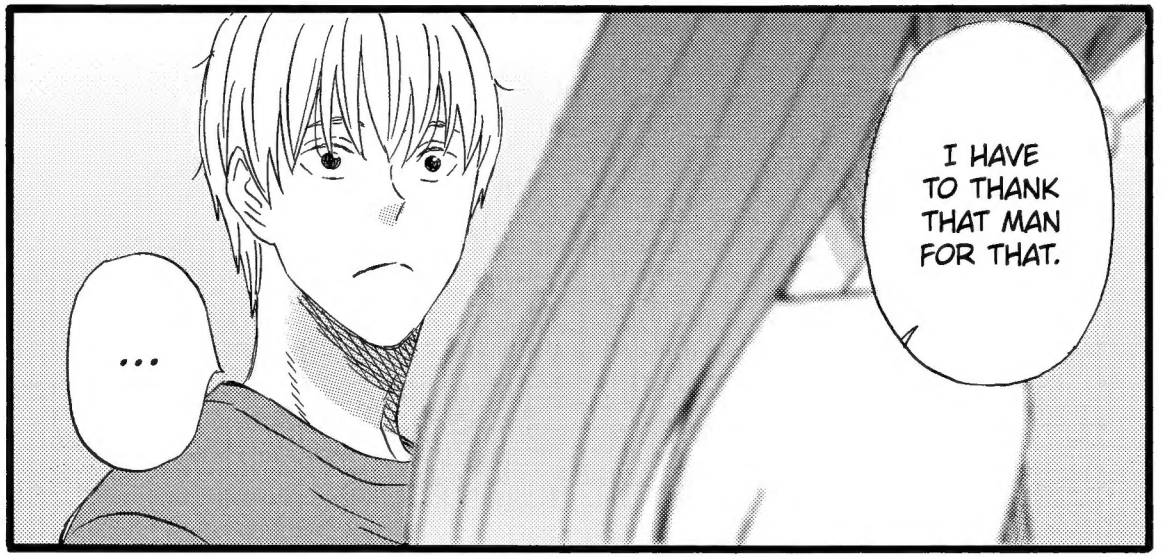

...I SEE. SO THAT'S THE REASON FOR LEAVING THE HOUSE...

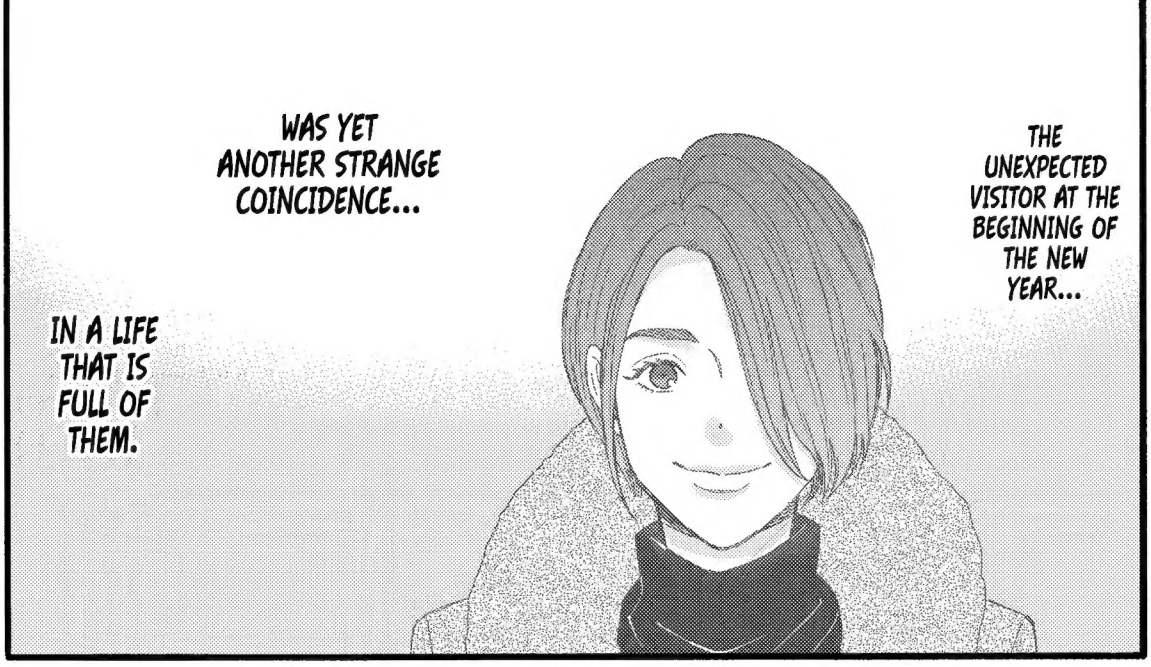
NO, I'M GLAD YOU TOLD ME. A LOT OF THINGS MAKE MORE SENSE NOW.

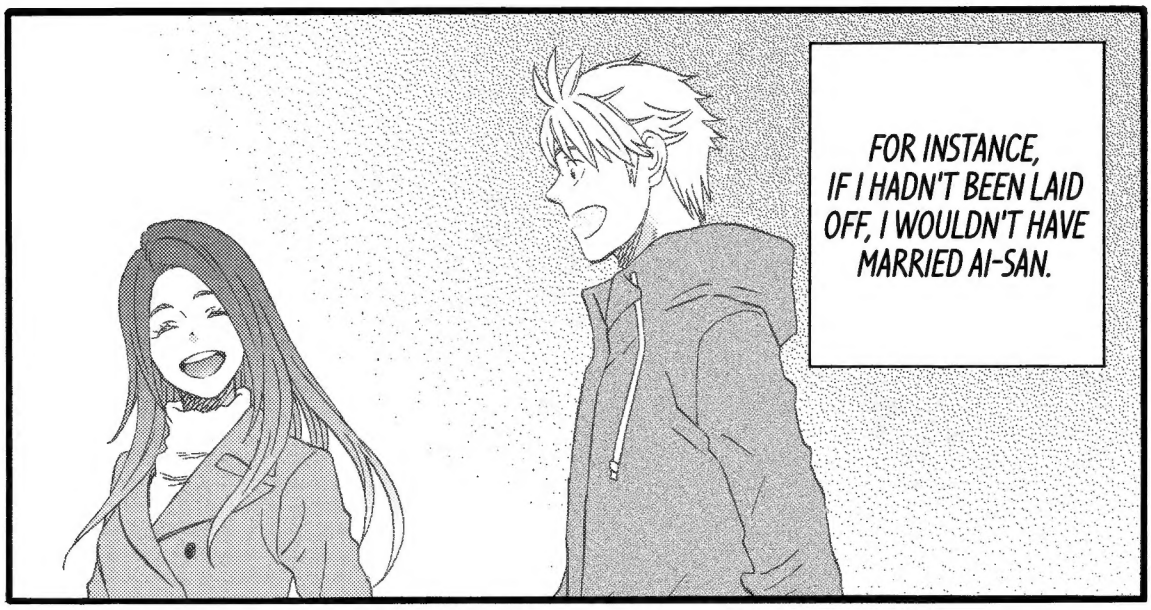
I'M SORRY. I THOUGHT I SHOULD TALK TO YOU ABOUT THIS, BUT...
PERHAPS IT'S SOMETHING YOU'D RATHER NOT KNOW.
...

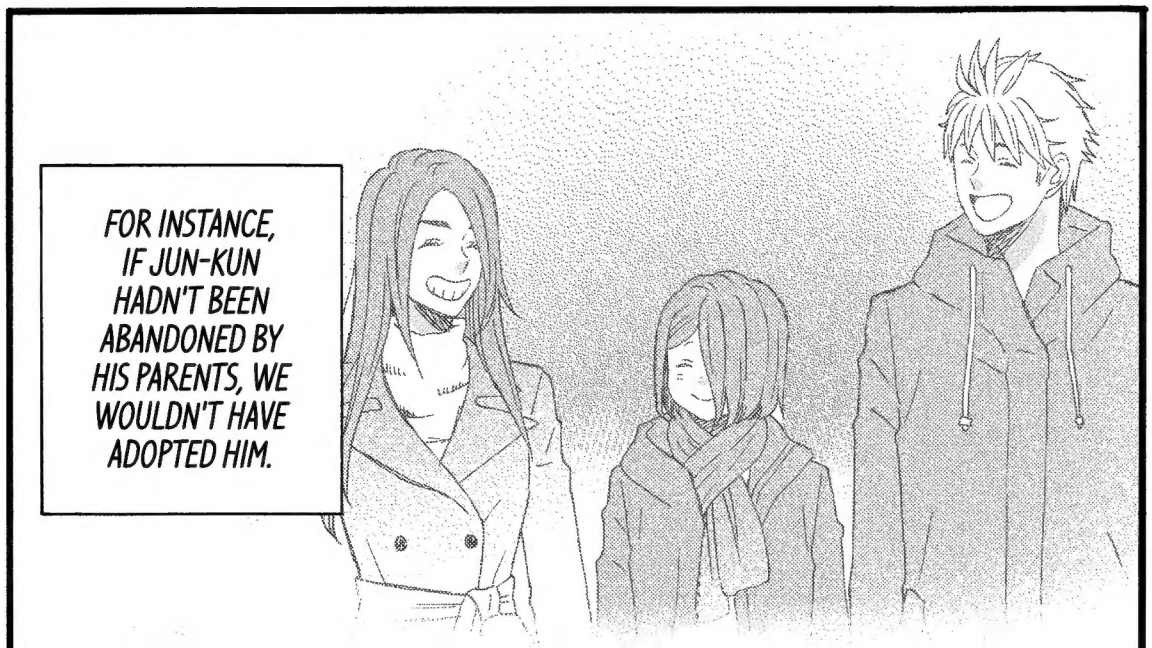

JUST LIKE SHE... I MEAN, HE SAID, MY FATHER WAS A FAIRLY CONSERVATIVE PERSON.
HOWEVER, HE ACTUALLY NEVER FORCED ME TO BE "NORMAL"...
Other than the "Don't go around naked!" part.
Yeah...

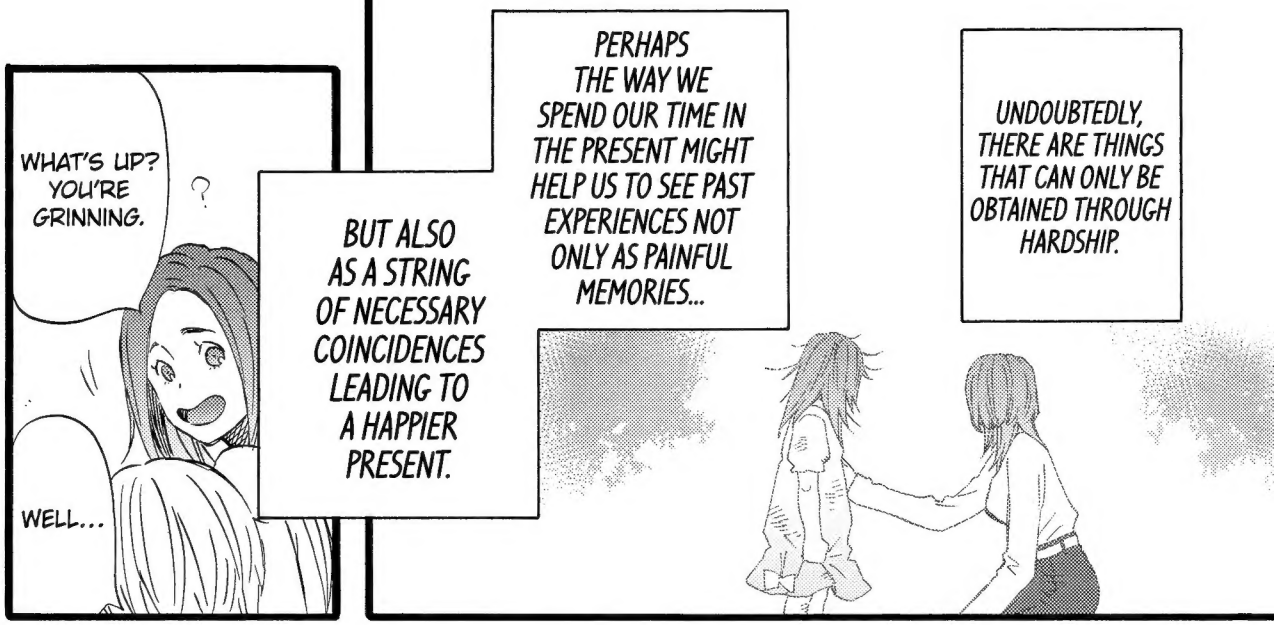

I THINK IT'S BECAUSE THAT MAN LEFT THE HOUSE THAT MY FATHER CHANGED...
HE PROBABLY CHANGED SO THAT SOMEONE WITH A STRONG AND SELF-CENTERED PERSONALITY SUCH AS MYSELF...
COULD LIVE HAPPILY IN THIS HOUSE.

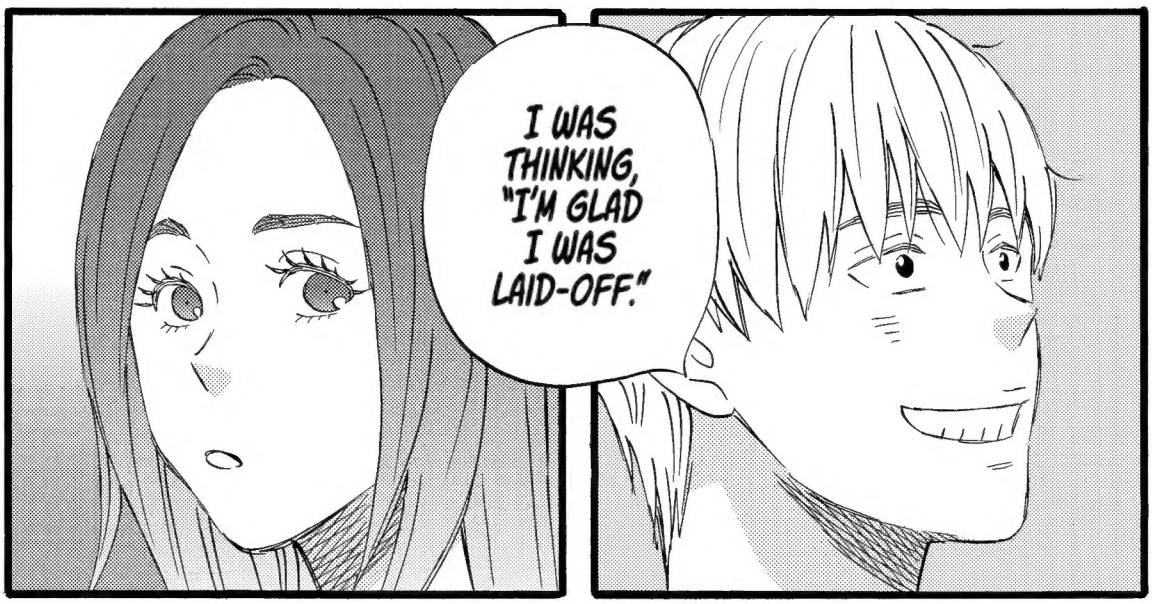

I HAVE TO THANK THAT MAN FOR THAT.
...


WAS YET ANOTHER STRANGE COINCIDENCE...
THE UNEXPECTED VISITOR AT THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW YEAR...
IN A LIFE THAT IS FULL OF THEM.


FOR INSTANCE, IF I HADN'T BEEN LAID OFF, I WOULDN'T HAVE MARRIED AI-SAN.


FOR INSTANCE, IF JUN-KUN HADN'T BEEN ABANDONED BY HIS PARENTS, WE WOULDN'T HAVE ADOPTED HIM.


WHAT'S UP? YOU'RE GRINNING.
WELL...
BUT ALSO AS A STRING OF NECESSARY COINCIDENCES LEADING TO A HAPPIER PRESENT.
PERHAPS THE WAY WE SPEND OUR TIME IN THE PRESENT MIGHT HELP US TO SEE PAST EXPERIENCES NOT ONLY AS PAINFUL MEMORIES...
UNDOUBTEDLY, THERE ARE THINGS THAT CAN ONLY BE OBTAINED THROUGH HARDSHIP.


I WAS THINKING, "I'M GLAD I WAS LAID-OFF."

ARE YOU OKAY? DO YOU HAVE A FEVER OR SOMETHING?
NO! I DON'T HAVE A FEVER!
I'M GLAD I LOST MY JOB BECAUSE I WOULDN'T HAVE MARRIED YOU OTHERWISE...
THEN SAY THAT FROM THE START. OR ELSE I WON'T GET IT.
GEEZ...!